

CAFTA: A RAW DEAL FOR AMERICA

(Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because CAFTA is a raw deal for America, and opposition to this agreement is so strong that the pushers of CAFTA are resorting to lies, deceptions, and backdoor deals.

We all know that CAFTA means exporting American jobs because of access to cheap labor markets with almost nonexistent environmental and labor standards.

All week long we have heard from the supporters of this badly negotiated trade agreement that they have the votes they need to pass it. But I do not want anybody to be fooled and buy this lie. The truth is that the overwhelming majority of House Members have already indicated that they oppose this bill because it is a bad deal for American workers.

They will not even tell us when CAFTA will come to the floor for a vote. Instead, we come to see CAFTA come deceptively to the floor in the middle of the night when they think the American public is not watching.

I urge my colleagues to vote their conscience, to not accept backdoor deals, to stand their ground. Vote for what they already know is best for the people of their district. Vote to send CAFTA back to the drawing board.

SALUTING NASA ON A SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF SPACE SHUTTLE "DISCOVERY"

(Mr. WELDON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute the men and women of NASA and the contractor community for a successful launch of the Space Shuttle *Discovery* following a 2½ year hiatus in the operations of our space shuttle program.

Yesterday morning I had the pleasure of witnessing the launch at the Banana Creek viewing site along with First Lady Laura Bush, and it was truly a beautiful sight to see our space shuttle flying again.

As shuttle commander Eileen Collins and the crew of *Discovery* work to complete their mission, we here in the House of Representatives, and I am sure every American can join me in this, wish them Godspeed and a safe return to planet Earth.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG REIMPORTATION

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, the stars have aligned. Senator FRIST has

agreed to a vote on drug reimportation. That is how we recognize health care reform and Health Care Week and make a dent in skyrocketing health care costs. Now we are getting somewhere.

I should not have to remind Members of this body that in the last Congress here in the House we passed reimportation with a bipartisan majority. It is time now for an up-or-down vote in this House. In the very week we are debating health care reform, only 1 week, I might add, what is conspicuously absent? The one item which actually would help control costs of drugs and pharmaceutical products, the reimportation, providing Americans with a 50 percent reduction in the price of their prescription drugs.

Springfield, Massachusetts saved \$6 million in the first year they began importing prescription drugs. But we cannot have any of that here in the people's House. No. We get to vote on protecting drug companies like Merck, who make Vioxx, from any public redress for misleading the public. George Orwell would appreciate that.

Americans can no longer afford double-digit increases in prescription drugs. Mr. Speaker, it is time we give them a break and a vote on reimportation of pharmaceutical products. That is the right way to make progress on controlling health care costs.

IN SUPPORT OF THE ENERGY CONFERENCE REPORT

(Mr. BARTON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to report that sometime this morning we are going to file the energy conference report. This is a piece of legislation that both parties can take pride in. A majority of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce Democrats have signed the conference report, including the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), distinguished ranking minority member. All of the Republicans have signed it in the Senate. Thirteen of the 14 Senate conferees have signed it.

This bill is going to transform our Nation's energy economy. It is going to breathe new life into clean coal technology, nuclear technology, renewable technology, and the ethanol industry. It is going to create tens of thousands of jobs for the American economy. It is going to lessen dependence on foreign sources of energy.

Regardless of what part of the country or what part of the economy each American is in, this energy bill will be a good deal for all Americans; and I would urge a "yes" vote when it comes to the floor sometime tomorrow afternoon.

IN OPPOSITION TO CAFTA

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I take my 1 minute today to discuss CAFTA because there will be little meaningful debate on the most important trade bill of this Congress. CAFTA is important less because of what is in it than what is not and because what it has come to represent.

I come from a trade-oriented community, and I believe in honest trade. I personally asked President Bush to insist upon bipartisan trade legislation that would command at least 250 votes in this Chamber. This is possible if we are fair to workers at home and abroad and more sensitive to the environment.

Instead, CAFTA has been crafted to be the lowest common denominator calculated to pass. By pandering to special interests, it reminds one of the old television show "Let's Make a Deal."

This is a lost opportunity. I will no longer support suboptimal trade agreements and await the day when we put principle and people before raw political calculation, pretending that it is trade policy.

A THREAT TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, 20 States including my home State of Georgia are experiencing a medical liability crisis. Hospitals are shutting their doors, doctors are leaving the profession, and patients are the ones left out in the cold.

OB-GYN doctors and some surgeons are paying hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in insurance premiums. One-third of the OB doctors in my State no longer deliver babies because delivering a baby is defined as a "high-risk procedure." Other specialists no longer cover emergency procedures.

One tragic story I am reminded of is a man who came to the emergency room after a fall with a subdural hematoma, or "bleeding on the brain." What is required to treat this is a relatively simple procedure performed by a neurosurgeon to relieve pressure on the brain. Instead of being saved, he died; and he died because there were no neurosurgeons at the hospital due to frivolous lawsuits and skyrocketing insurance rates.

Mr. Speaker, court rooms are interfering with our operating rooms and are threatening health care quality and raising the cost of health care for all Americans.

The HEALTH Act puts patients first and will protect our health care system for us and for our children and for our grandchildren. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5. Vote for the HEALTH Act.

CAFTA

(Mr. PASCRELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, NAFTA is the template on which this CAFTA agreement has been forged. Let us use the documented results of NAFTA to predict what will happen if Congress passes this latest flawed trade agreement.

Workers will see a decrease in real wages. The statistics are very clear.

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Number 2, CAFTA cannot reduce the number of immigrants. In fact, quite the contrary. What we have had in Mexico, for instance, as our prime example is 1.3 million agricultural jobs were lost to NAFTA. Look at the commitments, look at the promises by the past administration, by this administration, and what we have done is increased immigration across the borders. Some of our friends are talking out of both sides of their mouths.

The gap between the rich and the poor will increase. The redistribution of wealth upward will be exacerbated here in the United States under CAFTA, because more family wage jobs will be sent overseas, replaced by low-wage, Wal-Mart-type service jobs. Get it?

Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it. If CAFTA passes, doom will be the operative function of this Congress.

MYTHS AND FACTS ON REPUBLICAN MEDICAL MALPRACTICE LEGISLATION

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to debunk a couple of myths that we will probably hear today driving the debate over medical malpractice, H.R. 5.

Myth number 1: There is an explosion of malpractice lawsuits that are driving up premiums. Not true. A study by Kaiser Family Foundation found that lawsuits are not the cause of doctors' high premiums. In fact, another recent study found that insurers increased their premiums while claims went down.

Myth number 2: Malpractice lawsuits are the cause of rising health care costs. Not true. According to the CBO, malpractice costs amount to less than 2 percent of overall health care spending. Thus, even a reduction of 25 to 30 percent in malpractice costs would lower health care costs by a minuscule 5 percent.

Myth number 3: The malpractice bill is about weeding out frivolous lawsuits. Not true. The proposed limits on damages would apply to all cases, no matter how serious the injury was or how egregious by the doctor, hospital, nursing home, or drug manufacturer.

Any time we are talking about taking away the rights of Americans, you

have to be measured and cautious, something House Republicans are unwilling to do.

I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on H.R. 5.

GOP SOCIAL SECURITY PLAN CUTS BENEFITS AND CONTINUES TO RAID THE SOCIAL SECURITY TRUST FUND

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last month a few congressional Republicans unveiled a Social Security privatization plan that cuts guaranteed Social Security benefits and continues to raid the Social Security Trust Fund.

The Republican majority's Social Security plan includes a privatization tax that would cut guaranteed benefits for the people who need it most. This effectively replaces part of our guaranteed benefit with a private account and leaves us worse off, depending on the whims of the stock market. And anybody who has had stock during the last 2 years knows what that is.

Then, instead of protecting the Social Security Trust Fund, the Republican majority plans to take money out of the trust fund to pay for private accounts. The same congressional Republicans will raid \$670 billion more from the Social Security Trust Fund to pay for tax breaks for the wealthy.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue this same type of abuse. We urge all of the Members to look twice at Social Security and save it for the people.

INSURANCE COMPANIES RESPONSIBLE FOR HUGE MALPRACTICE INSURANCE PREMIUMS, NOT INJURED PATIENTS

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, today the House will vote on legislation Republicans claim will help doctors and help reduce the cost of health care. As a family doctor, I know their rhetoric could not be further from the truth.

Republicans say that capping what an injured patient can receive in compensation is a cure-all to our health care woes, but they ignore one essential fact, that it is the insurance industry, not payments to patients, that is chasing doctors out of their offices.

A report released in May shows that the 15 leading malpractice insurers increased their premiums on doctors by 120 percent. No surprise there. What is surprising is that the insurance companies' own documents show that payouts over this same period stayed flat, increasing by less than 6 percent, and some companies' payouts went down.

This just confirms what every reliable study has shown: There is no explosion of malpractice claims or pay-

outs. They are not the cause of rising premiums. It appears insurance rates are the major problem.

The Republicans refuse to talk about insurance reform. There is not one word in H.R. 5 about the insurance industry. Rather than really addressing the problem, Republicans would rather limit the rights of injured patients.

Vote "no" on H.R. 5.

SPECIAL PROSECUTOR WIDENS INVESTIGATION INTO CIA AGENT IDENTITY SCANDAL

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, for 2 years now, the White House has engaged in a cover-up of who leaked the identity of an undercover CIA agent. Two years ago, President Bush said he wanted to know who had leaked Valerie Plame's identity to reporters, and he said whoever it was would be fired.

Today we learned the special prosecutor has widened his investigation to see if any laws were broken when the White House tried to discredit allegations that President Bush used faulty intelligence to justify the Iraq war.

Now, this entire investigation centers around national security. White House officials jeopardized our national security when they outed a CIA agent's name. They also jeopardized our national security when they tried to discredit anyone who did not support their faulty intelligence that took us to war in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, this investigation should never have been needed in the first place. If the President's words had meant something, this would have been completed a long time ago.

KEEPING AMERICAN IDEALS ALIVE THROUGH CAFTA

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago, the Caribbean and Central America were inflamed with a virus that we called communism. It was in its ascendancy. Thanks to the courageous vision and leadership of President Ronald Reagan and many on both sides of the aisle in this Congress, the people of the United States of America invested in freedom.

Now, 20 years hence, we see fledgling democracies, even democracies that have sent soldiers to stand with our soldiers in Operation Iraqi Freedom. It is that nightmare turned into a dream of democracy that is at stake today in the vote on the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

Having stood with those who stood for freedom 20 years ago, let us not in this Congress and in this Nation turn our backs today on those same fledgling democracies that are embracing our principles of free market economics and freedom. Say yes to freedom in